

Appl. No. 10/718,881  
Amdt. 08/09/2005  
Response to Office Action of 05/10/2005

Attorney Docket No.: TS03-431  
N1085-90172

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

- 1 1. (Currently Amended) A method of defining an opening in a stack of insulator  
2 layers on a semiconductor substrate, comprising the steps of:
- 3 providing a conductive region on said semiconductor substrate;
- 4 forming a tri-layer insulator composite on said conductive region and on portions  
5 of said semiconductor substrate;
- 6 forming an insulator layer on said tri-layer insulator composite;
- 7 forming an opening in said insulator layer to expose a portion of a top surface of  
8 said tri-layer insulator composite; and
- 9 removing portion of said tri-layer insulator composite exposed in said opening,  
10 exposing a portion of a top surface of said conductive region,
- 11 wherein said tri-layer insulator composite is comprised of an underlying silicon  
12 rich - silicon oxide layer, a hydro - silicon oxynitride (SiOxNH) layer, and an overlying  
13 silicon nitride layer.
- 1 2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said conductive region is a  
2 source/drain region in a semiconductor substrate, ~~or a metal structure such as a metal~~  
3 interconnect structure or a further metal structure.
- 1 3. (Cancelled)
- 1 4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein [[an]] said underlying  
2 silicon rich[[,]]silicon oxide layer of said tri-layer insulator composite, is formed via low

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3 pressure chemical vapor deposition (LPCVD), via plasma enhanced chemical vapor  
4 deposition (PECVD), or via high density plasma chemical vapor deposition (HDPCVD)  
5 procedures, to a thickness between about 100 to 200 Angstroms, using silane or  
6 disilane, and oxygen or nitrous oxide as reactants.

1 5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein [[an]] said underlying  
2 silicon rich[[,]]-silicon oxide layer of said tri-layer insulator composite includes is  
3 ~~comprised with~~ a refractive index between about 1.485 to 1.55.

1 6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said [[a]] hydro - silicon  
2 oxynitride (HOxSN) (SiOxNH) layer of said tri-layer insulator composite is formed via  
3 LPCVD, PECVD, or HDPCVD procedures to a thickness between about 200 to 500  
4 Angstroms.

1 7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein [[a]] said overlying silicon  
2 nitride layer of said tri-layer insulator composite is formed via LPCVD or PECVD  
3 procedures to a thickness between about 100 to 200 Angstroms.

1 8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said insulator layer is comprised of an  
2 underlying boro-phosphosilicate glass (BPSG) layer, obtained via PECVD or LPCVD  
3 procedures to a thickness between about 1500 to 2500 Angstroms.

1 9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said insulator layer is comprised of an  
2 overlying silicon oxide layer, obtained via PECVD or LPCVD procedures to a thickness  
3 between about 5000 to 6000 Angstroms, using tetraethylorthosilicate (TEOS) as a  
4 source.

1 10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said opening in said insulator layer is  
2 formed via a dry etch, anisotropic reactive ion etch (RIE) procedure, using CHF<sub>3</sub> as an  
3 etchant for said insulator layer.

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11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein an over etch cycle used as a component of a dry etch procedure for said opening in said insulator layer, is performed via an anisotropic RIE procedure for a time between about 30 to 60sec, using  $\text{CHF}_3$  as an etchant.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~[[a]]~~ said overlying silicon nitride layer ~~component of said tri-layer insulator composite~~ is removed via an anisotropic RIE procedure using  $\text{CF}_4$  or  $\text{C}_{12}$  as an etchant.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said silicon rich~~[[.]]~~-silicon oxide layer of said tri-layer insulator composite is removed via anisotropic RIE procedure using  $\text{CHF}_3$  as an etchant.

14. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a opening in a stack of insulator layers located on an underlying conductive region, featuring a tri-layer insulator composite as an underlying component of the stack of insulator layers, used as a stop layer during an over etch cycle used to completely remove overlying components of said stack of insulator layers, comprising the steps of:

providing said conductive region;

forming said tri-layer insulator composite comprised of an underlying silicon rich~~[[.]]~~-silicon oxide layer, a hydro - silicon oxynitride ( $\text{HOXSN}$ ) ( $\text{SiOxNH}$ ) layer, and an overlying silicon nitride layer;

forming an overlying insulator layer;

forming photoresist shape with an opening exposing a portion of a top surface of said overlying insulator layer;

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- 13 performing a first phase of a dry etch procedure to remove portions of said  
14 overlying insulator layer exposed in said opening in said photoresist shape;
- 15 performing an over etch cycle as a second phase of said dry etch procedure to  
16 insure complete removal of said overlying insulator layer, with said over etch cycle  
17 terminating at the top surface of said silicon nitride layer of said tri-layer insulator  
18 composite;
- 19 performing a third phase of said dry etch procedure to selectively remove  
20 exposed portions of said silicon nitride and of said ~~HO<sub>x</sub>SN~~ SiO<sub>x</sub>NH; and
- 21 performing a fourth phase of said anisotropic dry etch procedure to selectively  
22 remove exposed portion of said silicon rich[] - silicon oxide layer, exposing a portion of  
23 a top surface of said conductive region.
- 1 15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said conductive region is a  
2 source/drain region in a semiconductor substrate, or a metal structure such as a metal  
3 interconnect structure.
- 1 16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said underlying silicon  
2 rich[]-silicon oxide layer is formed via low pressure chemical vapor deposition  
3 (LPCVD), or via plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) procedures, to a  
4 thickness between about 100 to 200 Angstroms, using silane or disilane, and oxygen or  
5 nitrous oxide as reactants.
- 1 17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said ~~HO<sub>x</sub>SN~~ SiO<sub>x</sub>NH  
2 layer is formed via LPCVD or via PECVD procedures, to a thickness between about 200  
3 to 500 Angstroms.
- 1 18. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said silicon nitride layer is formed via  
2 LPCVD or PECVD procedures, to a thickness between about 100 to 200 Angstroms.

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1 19. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said overlying insulator layer is  
2 comprised of an underlying boro-phosphosilicate glass (BPSG) layer, obtained via  
3 PECVD or LPCVD procedures to a thickness between about 1500 to 2500 Angstroms,  
4 and comprised of an overlying silicon oxide layer, obtained via PECVD or LPCVD  
5 procedures to a thickness between about 5000 to 6000 Angstroms, using  
6 tetraethylorthosilicate (TEOS) as a source.

1 20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said first phase of said dry etch  
2 procedure, employed to define said opening in said overlying insulator layer, is an  
3 anisotropic reactive ion etch (RIE) procedure performed using  $\text{CHF}_3$  as an etchant for  
4 said overlying insulator layer.

1 21. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said over etch cycle of said second  
2 phase of said dry etch procedure, is an anisotropic RIE procedure performed for a time  
3 between about 30 to 60 sec., using  $\text{CHF}_3$  as an etchant.

1 22. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said third phase of said dry etch  
2 procedure used to selectively remove said silicon nitride layer, is an anisotropic RIE  
3 procedure performed using  $\text{CF}_4$  or  $\text{C}_2\text{F}_4$  as an etchant.

1 23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said fourth phase of said  
2 dry etch procedure used to selectively remove said silicon rich[  ]-silicon oxide layer, is  
3 an anisotropic RIE procedure performed using  $\text{CHF}_3$  as an etchant.

1 24. (Currently Amended) A method of forming an opening in insulator layers,  
2 comprising the steps of:

3 providing a semiconductor substrate;

4 forming a conductive region on said semiconductor substrate;

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- 5 forming a tri-layer insulator over said conductive region and on said  
6 semiconductor substrate, with said tri-layer insulator comprised with a hydro-silicon  
7 oxynitride (~~HOxSN~~) (SiOxNH) middle layer;
- 8 forming an insulator layer on said tri-layer insulator; and
- 9 forming an opening in said insulator layer and in said tri-layer insulator to expose  
10 said conductive region.
- 1 25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein said conductive region is a  
2 source/drain region in a semiconductor substrate, or a metal structure such as a metal  
3 interconnect structure.
- 1 26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 24, wherein said tri-layer insulator is  
2 comprised of an underlying silicon rich[~~(.)]~~-silicon oxide layer at a thickness between  
3 about 100 to 200 Angstroms, comprised of said ~~HOxSN~~ SiOxNH middle layer at a  
4 thickness between about 200 to 500 Angstroms, and comprised of an overlying silicon  
5 nitride layer at a thickness between about 100 to 200 Angstroms.
- 1 27. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein said overlying insulator layer is  
2 comprised of an underlying boro-phosphosilicate glass (BPSG) layer at a thickness  
3 between about 1500 to 2500 Angstroms, and comprised of an overlying silicon oxide  
4 layer at a thickness between about 5000 to 6000 Angstroms.
- 1 28. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein said opening in said insulator layer  
2 and in said tri-layer insulator is formed via a dry etch, anisotropic reactive ion etch (RIE)  
3 procedure.